



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Chief FOIA Officer's Annual Report

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**March 2017**

## I. Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

The guiding principle underlying the President's FOIA Memorandum and the Department of Justice's 2009 FOIA Guidelines is the presumption of openness.

Describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied to all decisions involving the FOIA. To do so, you should answer the questions listed below and then include any additional information you would like to describe how your agency is working to apply the presumption of openness.

### *FOIA Training*

- 1. Did your FOIA professionals or the personnel at your agency who have FOIA responsibilities attend any FOIA training or conference during the reporting period such as that provided by the Department of Justice?**

Yes. USAID's FOIA professionals attended FOIA training during the reporting period, to include the Agency specific week-long Records Management and FOIA Access Training. Other FOIA training attended include courses and sessions provided by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the American Society for Access Professionals (ASAP) 8<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference on FOIA and the Privacy Act.

- 2. Provide an estimate of the percentage of your FOIA professionals and staff with FOIA responsibilities who attended substantive FOIA training during this reporting period.**

One hundred percent (100%) of USAID's Government Information Specialists (FOIA Specialists) attended substantive FOIA training during the reporting period.

- 3. OIP has directed agencies to "take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout the year." If your response to the previous question is less than 80% of your FOIA professionals attended training, please explain your agency's plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals receive or attend substantive FOIA training during the next reporting year.**

Not applicable.

### *Other Initiatives*

- 4. Describe any efforts your agency has undertaken to inform non-FOIA professionals of their obligations under the FOIA?**

USAID is committed to FOIA compliance and, as such, recognizes the need to inform all of its employees, including non-FOIA professionals, of their role and obligation in this regard. To this end, USAID employs a variety of mechanisms to promulgate the important responsibility

enterprise-wide. Related governing policy is codified in the Agency's Automated Directive Systems and agency-wide notices covering various FOIA topics are distributed. A variety of training opportunities are provided as well. For example, the Agency FOIA Public Liaison delivered a FOIA overview at each of the newly rolled out M Bureau Knowledge and Learning Program (MKL) trainings last year. MKL is the USAID Bureau for Management's corporate program that provides an integrated approach to knowledge sharing and training on operations processes, systems and tools. In addition, one week-long Records Management and FOIA Access Training targeting various audiences was delivered worldwide. The FOIA topics, provide an overview of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, as well as describes how to scope a request, conduct a search for responsive records in response to a FOIA request, provide release recommendations, and the importance of administrative records, to help ensure compliance. In Calendar Year 2016, there were nine (9) sessions held globally.

As warranted, other briefings and information sessions are used to inform USAID employees at all levels, regardless of labor category, of their FOIA responsibilities.

**5. If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied, please describe them here.**

USAID regularly ensures that the presumption of openness is applied to all release determinations. USAID recognizes that some of the FOIA exemptions are discretionary, such as FOIA Exemption (b)(5) which protects the internal deliberative process. In an effort to be as transparent as possible, all FOIA Specialists collaborate with USAID's Bureaus, Independent Offices and Missions to ensure all release recommendations comport with the foreseeable harm standard codified in the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016.

## **II. Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency has an Effective System in Place for Responding to Requests**

**The Department of Justice's 2009 FOIA Guidelines emphasized that "[a]pplication of the proper disclosure standard is only one part of ensuring transparency. Open government requires not just a presumption of disclosure, but also an effective system for responding to FOIA requests." It is essential that agencies effectively manage their FOIA program.**

**Describe the steps your agency has taken to ensure that your management of your FOIA program is effective and efficient. To do so, answer the questions below and then include any additional information that you would like to describe how your agency ensures that your FOIA system is efficient and effective.**

### ***Processing Procedures***

**I. For Fiscal Year 2016, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing? \*\*Please see Section VIII.A. of USAID's Fiscal Year 2016 Annual FOIA Report.\*\***

The average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing improved to 3.05 from 8.34 days in Fiscal Year 2015.

2. **If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendars or less.**

Not applicable.

**Please provide an estimate of how many requests your agency processed in Fiscal Year 2016 that were from commercial use requesters. If your agency is decentralized, please identify any components within your agency that received a majority of their requests from commercial use requesters.**

Of the total number of requests, appeals, and consultations processed in Fiscal Year 2016, an estimated 45 of those were from commercial use requesters.

### **Requester Services**

**Agency FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons serve as the face and voice of an agency. In this capacity, they provide a very important service for requesters, informing them about how the FOIA process works and providing specific details on the handling of their individual requests. The FOIA also calls on agency FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons to assist requesters in resolving disputes.**

3. **Does your agency provide a mechanism for requesters to provide feedback about their experience with the FOIA process at your agency? If so, please describe the methods used, such as making the FOIA Public Liaison available to receive feedback, using surveys posted on the agency's website, etc.**

Requesters are welcomed to contact the USAID FOIA Team Lead or FOIA Public Liaison to provide feedback. Additionally, contact information for each FOIA Specialist, is available on the USAID website facilitating opportunities for direct dialogue regarding a specific request. Further, the FOIA Public Liaison and her contact information are referenced in all response letters in accordance with the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016.

4. **The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires additional notification to requesters about the services provided by the agency's FOIA Public Liaison. Please provide an estimate of how often requesters sought assistance from your agency's FOIA Public Liaison.**

Requesters sought the assistance of the FOIA Public Liaison fewer than five (5) times in FY 2016.

- 5. The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 requires agencies to make their reference material or guide for requesting records or information from the agency electronically available to the public. Please provide a link to your agency’s FOIA reference guide.**

USAID posts its FOIA request guidance on its website at <https://www.usaid.gov/foia-requests>.

### ***Other Initiatives***

**If there are any other steps your agency has undertaken to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively, such as improving search processes, eliminating redundancy, etc., please describe them here.**

USAID continually assesses its overall FOIA program to identify and implement greater efficiencies. Each FOIA Specialists’ caseload is assessed throughout the year to apply focused attention to backlogged and complex requests (e.g., requests for email; requests that require a search of multiple offices; pre-date USAID’s existence in 1961; require language translation, etc.), while addressing incoming new requests. In addition, USAID has procured tools and continues to improve on its software to streamline electronic searches and processing. USAID has also secured contract staff to support both processing and e-discovery efforts, including de-duplication of electronic record, and carrying-out 508 compliance for proactive disclosure.

### **III. Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures**

**Both the President’s and the Department of Justice’s memoranda focused on the need for agencies to work proactively to post information online without waiting for individual requests to be received.**

**Please answer the following questions to describe the steps your agency has taken to increase the amount of material that is available on your agency websites. In addition to the questions below, you should also describe any additional steps taken by your agency to make and improve proactive disclosures of information.**

#### ***Posting Material***

- I. Describe your agency’s process or system for identifying “frequently requested” records required to be posted online.**

USAID has a robust open data program and proactively posts much of its program and project information online. To further its commitment to open data, USAID has included mandatory language in all of its acquisition and assistance awards to indicate that any dataset created during the implementation of the award be submitted and added to USAID’s Development Data Library ([www.usaid.gov/data](http://www.usaid.gov/data)), which is a public repository for Agency-funded, machine readable data.

More pointedly, with regard to FOIA, the FOIA Registrar reviews all incoming FOIA requests and scans the database to identify any similar information requests. If more than two (2) similar requests are identified, the responsive documents are reviewed to consider if the information is appropriate for proactive disclosure by virtue of posting online.

**2. Does your agency have a distinct process or system in place to identify other records for proactive disclosure? If so, please describe USAID's process or system.**

In addition to proactive disclosure of frequently requested records and, information related to current media interest covering topics such as the agency's response to the Zika virus and Hurricane Matthew, USAID routinely identifies vast data sets and proactively discloses such information pursuant to the Government's Open Data Initiative. USAID also proactively discloses information in response.

**3. Has your agency encountered challenges that make it difficult to post records you otherwise would like to post? If so, briefly explain those challenges and how your agency is working to overcome them.**

The greatest challenge for posting FOIA records has been the 508 compliance requirement. In an effort to overcome this challenge, USAID has recently procured contractor support who will assume the primary task of making I appropriate FOIA record releases 508 compliant prior to posting online.

**4. Provide examples of material that USAID has proactively disclosed during the past reporting year, including links to the posted material.**

USAID remains committed to the Open Government Initiative. In September of 2016, USAID published the fourth version of its Open Government Plan ([https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAID\\_OpenGovPlan2016.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAID_OpenGovPlan2016.pdf)). The Plan illustrates USAID's values of transparency, participation, and collaboration.

Examples of proactively disclosed material include:

- Dollars to Results (<https://results.usaid.gov/>) is the only place where USAID systematically and publicly reports on the impact of its work by linking investment and performance information. Dollars to Results visualizes USAID's impact by linking fiscal year results to fiscal year disbursements (spending). Dollars to Results displays results with reader friendly explanations and users can download data in machine-readable format.
- ForeignAssistance.gov is the vehicle by which the U.S. government reports to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). USAID has emphasized reporting project documents and information, results, and sector codes as priority data needs for users.
- New data USAID released in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) format in fiscal year 2016 include: links to performance and impact evaluations, and annual activity budget.

- USAID included an update on its IATI progress in its 2016 Financial Report ([https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAID\\_FY2016\\_AFR.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAID_FY2016_AFR.pdf)) and USAID's Open Government Plan ([https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAID\\_OpenGovPlan2016.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAID_OpenGovPlan2016.pdf)).
- USAID also published a blog in 2016 highlighting its increased IATI reporting (<https://blog.usaid.gov/2016/04/usaaid-continues-deliver-on-aid-transparency/>).
- Zika Grand Challenge Social Media Toolkit (<https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/global-health/zika-toolkit>)
- Congressional Testimony: USAID Response to the Zika Outbreak (<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/feb-10-2016-ariel-pablos-mendez-aa-gh-usaid-response-zika-outbreak>)
- ON-THE-RECORD BRIEFING: U.S. Government Actions and Assistance for Countries Affected by Hurricane Matthew (<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/speeches/oct-5-2016-on-record-briefing-us-government-actions-and-assistance-hurricane-matthew>)

**5. Did USAID use any means to publicize or highlight important disclosures for public awareness? If yes, please describe those efforts.**

USAID publicizes and highlights important disclosures for public awareness primarily via social media. For example, when USAID publishes new datasets to the Development Data Library, it continues to issue notification via its Agency-wide Twitter handle. USAID has roughly 617,000 Twitter followers. In addition to Twitter, USAID proactively discloses its evaluations to the public on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) website (<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx>).

**Other Initiatives**

**6. If there are any other steps your agency has taken to improve proactive disclosures, please describe them here. For example, has your agency engaged requesters in determining how and what to post? Has your agency used web analytics to inform your proactive disclosures?**

USAID is continually improving proactive disclosures and is doing so by investing in data quality improvements and looking into ways to make data more useable. For example, USAID is undertaking pilot work to see if its International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data can be automatically mapped to developing countries' AID Information Management Systems. USAID is also examining a theory of change around open data to advance transparency and openness more generally in government. The Agency is launching a connect stream of work to develop guidelines for the responsible use of data by governments to ensure openness and transparency does not infringe on the rights of citizens.

## IV. Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

A key component of the President's FOIA Memorandum was the direction to "use modern technology to inform citizens about what is known and done by their Government." In addition to using the internet to make proactive disclosures, agencies should also be exploring ways to utilize technology in responding to requests.

Please answer the following questions to describe how your agency is utilizing technology to improve its FOIA administration and the public's access to information. You should also include any additional information that describes your agency's efforts in this area.

### *Making Material Posted Online More Useable*

- 1. Beyond posting new material, is your agency taking steps to make the posted information more useable to the public, especially to the community of individuals who regularly access your agency's website?**

USAID established USAID Open—a front door function in Washington, DC—to respond to inquiries received from the general public. USAID Open, through its public email address ([open@usaid.gov](mailto:open@usaid.gov)) and the public inquiries phone line (202-712-4810), responds to public inquiries by directing the public to information already available on the [usaid.gov](http://usaid.gov) website, or forwarding queries to the appropriate bureau or independent office to obtain relevant information for an accurate response.

Through the use of social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), USAID posts information for public consumption to these channels on a regular basis. These platforms provide a way for the public to engage with the agency on a variety of subjects. In addition, the public can sign-up for newsletters and other types of updates. USAID maintains a number of mailing lists you can join for updates on USAID activities (<https://www.usaid.gov/stayconnected>). Further, USAID's new captivating storytelling experience (<https://stories.usaid.gov/>) conveys the stories of individuals, families, and communities in transformation.

- 2. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.**

Specific improvements include the following:

- In fiscal year 2016, USAID updated Dollars to Results (<https://results.usaid.gov/>) with fiscal year 2015 data for the 44 countries listed on the website. Users can now view fiscal year 2015 financial data and high-level information at the country, sector, or subsector level with the results shown at the subsector level.
- Dollars to Results was presented at the International Open Data Conference in Madrid, Spain in October 2016. After the presentation, users filled out a survey on USAID's data portals—including the Dollars to Results site—so that USAID can learn how to improve the site and raise awareness about its data portals.



- In Fiscal Year 2016, USAID implemented the first three (3) phases of the IATI cost management plan (<https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1870/usaid/iati-cost-management-plan>), publishing a total of 17 new fields and making considerable progress delivering on its IATI commitments. As a result, USAID achieved a 19 percentage point increase between 2014 and 2016 in Publish What You Fund’s Aid Transparency Index. USAID also developed the capability to report in XML, and streamlined its internal processes for removing sensitive information prior to public, including more clearly noting to the public when the Agency redacted information.
- Using its information technology expertise and the modern, agile development process, the Power Africa Tracking Tool (PATT) (<https://www.usaid.gov/power-africa/newsletter/jan2016/powerafrica-trackingtool>) is a mobile application that makes data on electricity publicly available in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Other Initiatives**

#### **3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2016?**

Yes.

#### **4. If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports, with information appearing on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency’s plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2017.**

Not applicable.

## **V. Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs**

The President’s FOIA Memorandum and the Department of Justice’s 2009 FOIA Guidelines have emphasized the importance of improving timeliness in responding to requests. This section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report addresses both time limits and backlog reduction. Backlog reduction is measured both in terms of numbers of backlogged requests or appeals and by looking at whether agencies closed their ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations. For the figures required in this Section, please use the numbers contained in the specified sections of your agency’s 2016 Annual FOIA Report and, when applicable, your agency’s 2015 Annual FOIA Report.

### **Simple Track**

Section VII.A of your agency’s Annual FOIA Report, entitled “FOIA Requests – Response Time for All Processed Requests,” includes figures that show your agency’s average response times for processed requests. For agencies utilizing a multi-track system to process requests, there is a category for “simple” requests, which are those requests that are placed in the agency’s fastest (non-expedited) track, based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.

#### **I. Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests?**

Yes.

2. **If so, for your agency overall in Fiscal Year 2016, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer?**

The average number of days to process simple requests was 30.77 in FY 2016.

3. **Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2016 that were placed in your simple track.**

USAID placed 7.3% of the Agency's processed requests in the simple track.

4. **If your agency does not track simple requests separately, was the average number of days to process all non-expedited requests twenty working days or fewer?**

Not Applicable.

### **Backlogs**

Section XII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals" shows the numbers of any backlogged requests or appeals from the fiscal year. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2015 and Fiscal Year 2016 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

#### **Backlogged Requests**

5. **If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2016, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2015?**

USAID maintains a strong commitment to transparency and therefore remains committed to eliminating its FOIA backlog. While the total annual number of backlogged requests in Fiscal Year 2016 increased to 318 from 304 in Fiscal Year 2015, similarly the total number of requests received and processed also increased in Fiscal Year 2016.

6. **If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:**
  - **An increase in the number of incoming requests**
  - **A loss of staff**
  - **An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.**
  - **Any other reasons—please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.**

Factors contributing the backlog include the following:

- **Complexity.** FOIA requests and corresponding responsive records have increased in complexity. USAID, in accordance with DOJ guidelines, maintains simple, complex and expedited tracks for requests. The majority of all requests submitted to USAID are complex. By their nature, complex requests are those which involve voluminous records for which numerous consultations are required, or which involve sensitive records. For example, USAID operates in high-threat and non-permissive environments where safety and security are paramount concerns. Therefore, extraordinary care is exercised in the review of many requested records and necessitates the coordination and collaboration of internal and external stakeholders. In addition, many of the requests USAID receives seek records that contain confidential and commercial information. Thus, as required by Executive Order 12600, USAID must routinely solicit business submitter's comment on releasability of their confidential commercial information. And, as a result, USAID frequently invokes 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4) to protect certain submitter proprietary information that could cause competitive harm if it were to be released. Overall, this process of liaising with submitters requires additional processing days for coordination, deliberation, and ultimately, redaction of confidential information.
- **Volume.** Broad requests seeking many documents require extensive collaboration with requesters in an attempt to more specifically pinpoint agency records sought. FOIA staff will often communicate with the requestor to better define the scope, after which collaboration with the appropriate USAID office(s) often occurs. This often includes various offices in Washington and around the globe, as well as communication with internal and external stakeholders, contributing to significant processing time.
- **World-wide Events.** Requests driven by unforeseen or unplanned events that often times also become matters in the media (e.g., Tsunamis, Zika virus, Hurricane Matthew, etc.) increase public interest and the need to collaborate/coordinate internationally. Requesters in these circumstances often seek and are granted expedited treatment in processing. Focusing attention on these time-sensitive requests can delay the processing of other existing requests.
- **Open Data Initiative/Congressional Inquiries.** The USAID FOIA team has an expanded role in opining on the release of data in response to the Open Data Initiative and processing documents in response to time-sensitive Congressional inquiries. With regard to open data, the FOIA team plays an integral role in the established agency review process for data sets published publicly. With regard to Congressional inquiries, the FOIA staff is engaged to apply expertise on transparency and records access to inform USAID's decision-making process that leads to information-sharing.

USAID will continue to assess its backlog and develop strategies to eliminate the backlog.

**7. If you had a request backlog please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2016.**

The percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by USAID in Fiscal Year 2016 decreased to 84% from 91% in Fiscal Year 2015.

### **Backlogged Appeals**

- 8. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2016, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2015?**

While the number of backlogged appeals remained the same, all backlogged appeals reported were received in Fiscal Year 2016 and are not a carryover from Fiscal Year 2015. Thus, there is no change in the number of appeals backlogged as compared to the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2015.

- 9. If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able reduce backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:**

- **An increase in the number of incoming appeals**
- **A loss of staff**
- **An increase in the complexity of the appeals received**

In addition to the same factors contributing to the FOIA backlog, USAID completes a de novo review of each appeal. The de novo review encompasses: (1) confirmation that the foreseeable harm standard was applied initially; (2) ensuring application of sound legal analyses; (3) citing to appropriate records dispositions where applicable; and (4) providing detailed and comprehensive appeal response letters. These subsequent reviews are thorough and often require concentrated attention to the complex challenges raised on appeal.

In Fiscal Year 2016, the two (2) most challenged exemptions were FOIA Exemptions (b)(4) and (b)(6). On de novo review, additional submitter notifications were issued when appropriate. Additional discussions with stakeholders closely connected to the Agency's programs and geographic locations referenced and/or implicated in the documents was also required, especially to address the complex personal safety and security challenges of FOIA Exemption (b)(6).

- 10. If you had an appeal backlog please report the percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2016. If your agency did not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2016 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."**

The percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by USAID in Fiscal Year 2016 is 35%.

## ***Status of Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations***

Section VII.E, entitled “Pending Requests – Ten Oldest Pending Requests,” Section VI.C.(5), entitled “Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals,” and Section XII.C., entitled “Consultations on FOIA Requests – Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at Your Agency,” show the ten oldest pending requests, appeals, and consultations. You should refer to these numbers from your Annual FOIA Reports for both Fiscal Year 2015 and Fiscal Year 2016 when completing this section of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.

### **Ten Oldest Requests**

**11. In Fiscal Year 2016, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes.

**12. If no, please provide the number of these requests your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.E of your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.**

Not applicable.

**13. Of the requests your agency was able to close from your ten oldest, please indicate how many of these were closed because the request was withdrawn by the requester. If any were closed because the request was withdrawn, did you provide any interim responses prior to the withdrawal?**

One request was withdrawn by the requester and no interims were provided.

### **Ten Oldest Appeals**

**14. In Fiscal Year 2016, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were pending as in your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes.

**15. If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed Section VII.C. (5) of your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.**

Not applicable.

### **Ten Oldest Consultations**

**16. In Fiscal Year 2016, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report?**

Yes.

- 17. If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.**

Not applicable.

***Additional Information on Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations & Plans***

- 18. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2016.**

Not applicable.

- 19. If your agency was unable to close any of its ten oldest requests because you were waiting to hear back from other agencies on consultations you sent, please provide the date the request was initially received by your agency, the date when your agency sent the consultation, and the date when you last contacted the agency where the consultation was pending.**

Not applicable.

- 20. If your agency did not close its ten oldest pending requests, appeals, or consultations, please provide a plan describing how your agency intends to close those “ten oldest” requests, appeals, and consultations during Fiscal Year 2017.**

Not applicable.

**VI. Success Story**

**Out of all the activities undertaken by your agency since March 2016 to increase transparency and improve FOIA administration, please briefly describe here at least one success story that you would like to highlight as emblematic of your agency’s efforts. The success story can come from any one of the five key areas. As noted above, these agency success stories will be highlighted during Sunshine Week by OIP. To facilitate this process, all agencies should use bullets to describe their success story and limit their text to a half page. The success story is designed to be a quick summary of key achievements. A complete description of all your efforts will be contained in the body of your Chief FOIA Officer Report.**

USAID, in a very concerted effort, closed all of its ten oldest FOIA requests, appeals and consultations reported pending in its Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report.

Additionally, as required by the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 (Act) and, in accordance with the Agency's FOIA Improvement Plan, USAID successfully overhauled its August 1996 FOIA regulations (CFR 22, Part 212), meeting the aggressive deadline of the December 27, 2016 established by the Act.

The Act required agencies to review their FOIA regulations, and no later than 180 days after enactment, directed the head of each agency to issue regulations on various elements of its FOIA program. This was no small feat. Coordination with various internal and external stakeholders, in addition to completing the required public notice and comment period in the Federal Register were huge accomplishments. The updated regulations – which expanded from 19 pages to 69 pages of useful information for the public - reflect USAID's continuous commitment to transparency and improving its FOIA operations.